

A. M. E. MINISTERS.

Their Influence Upon Race Progress to be Recorded by Mr. Ralph W. Tyler—Story of How the Work Came to be Inaugurated

One of the brightest writers in the country is Mr. Ralph W. Tyler, who holds a responsible position upon the staff of the *Columbus Daily Dispatch*. He is well-posted upon the general history of the race in church matters, as well as in the arena of politics, business, education and journalism. We are pleased to note that the versatile Mr. Tyler has been associated in the work of preparing the *Encyclopedia of A. M. E. Ministers*. It is claimed that this work will show unmistakably that the A. M. E. industry has been the strongest force at work, and has exerted the most potent influence in the wonderful advancement of the American Negro. As



Ralph W. Tyler

no one connected with the work is connected directly or indirectly with the A. M. E. church, in making good this claim for the A. M. E. ministry, the charge of coloring or favoritism cannot possibly be made.

This *Encyclopedia* is exciting considerable interest in the ministry of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the question among them is who and how many will measure up to a standard sufficiently high to appear in this work. A New York gentleman who happened in Washington the other day related the story of how it came that such a work was projected. He stated that it really was the result of a wager between two wealthy white gentlemen, one from the West and the other from the South, who happened to be dining together at the Waldorf, New York city.

During the conversation the subject of the colored man came up, the gentleman from the South making the remark that the Southern whites were the Negro's best friend, and had educated him. The wealthy Western gentleman took exceptions to this statement, saying that those colored men who had not educated themselves had been educated by Northern money, and in the conversation that ensued declared that the advancement of the colored man, in the last quarter of a century, was due to the ministers of the A. M. E. church, and that he could prove it; that organization contained more black brains than all other organizations put together.

The result of it all was the Western millionaire agreed to collect together all the A. M. E. ministers who had accomplished something, and when collected it would show that this ministry was in the majority. It was stipulated that no man connected with the A. M. E. church should be engaged in the preparation of the work. This occurred last summer. The next question with the Western millionaire was the selection of the man who should have charge of the work. He preferred to have a colored man as editor, but who? Many names were canvassed for the work, and finally the Western millionaire visited Mr. Tyler, presented his plan and made him a proposition. He was given a week to consider it, at the end of which time he declined the offer, stating that he did not care to give up his position on the *Columbus Evening Dispatch* staff, and the

work was too great to be accomplished, in the length of time allowed, in connection with his work on the *Dispatch*. A second proposition was made him, extending the time for completion, and carrying with it a handsome increase in salary. Mr. Tyler finally accepted and went to work, still retaining his position on the *Dispatch*.

It is estimated that the expense attached to getting out the work will be in the neighborhood of over \$25,000, quite \$20,000 of this being for the mechanical labor, all of which the Western millionaire furnishes.

The edition is to be limited to 10,000 copies, and if placed on the market, it will be simply by subscription, and the charge per copy being only sufficient to cover the mechanical cost. For instance if the mechanical cost of 10,000 copies is \$20,000 the price per copy will be \$2, the salary of Mr. Tyler and his assistants not to be considered or estimated in the cost, but borne by the Western millionaire. In fact, he is to put up the money for the entire costs.

An iron-clad agreement was made that his name should not be mentioned, for the reason, as he stated it, "If my name is known in connection with furnishing funds for this work, my life will be made a burden by hundreds of people and organizations importuning me for donations, to churches, colleges, societies and what not."

When the work is completed, however, the name of the wealthy gentleman, who by the way is a great friend of the race, and has proved his friendship on many occasions, that made this work possible, will be made public.

The gentleman who related this story to THE COLORED AMERICAN, further states that he knows it is the intention of this millionaire benefactor, should the entire ten thousand copies be sold, to donate at least one third of the money received from the sale to the A. M. E. church as a fund for aged and superannuated ministers.

It is believed, should the consent of the backer of this project be secured to make the edition 20,000 instead of limiting it to 10,000, he would gladly, and cheerfully donate fully one-half of the proceeds for the purpose named. It is believed, at the proper time, Mr. Tyler will make this suggestion. A sufficient sum might be accumulated, in this way, to furnish comforts for many an old minister who has grown gray in the cause, for not one in a hundred when he reaches the age when infirmities of age renders him incapable of active pastorage has sufficient to live comfortably.

THE GOSPEL OF WORK.

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me then as being supplied with unusual common sense, a broad and informed mind, a well-grounded and clear-visioned man. My larger and closer experience has proven the correctness of that early estimate. Intellectually, he is unencumbered with any useless learning and is singularly free from all fads and crankisms. Reaching from humble beginnings a position of power and distinction as journalist, lawyer and diplomat by toilsome and faithful application he has never forgot the pit-falls and obstacles he has so successfully overcome, which is at once the menace and the glory of any young man starting life in a civilization like ours.

John Durham began life under conditions peculiarly American. His parents were honest, hard-working, respectable and poor. He "worked" his way through school and college. His whole career spells work. The career of Lincoln, Garfield, Blaine and Garrison are at once suggested in this respect. His life has been free of romance. It has been work! work! He is a native Philadelphian, and at an early age showed a natural aptness for his studies. He went through the public schools in order, graduating at the Institute for Colored Youth—that school made famous by Mrs. Fannie Jackson-Coppin. The following year he began teaching holding many positions of prominence in the public schools of Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey. After preparing for College he entered the University of Pennsylvania, where he took a five year's course in science, graduating with the degree of Bachelor of Science. He also

took a post graduate course in civil engineering. While at the University he was editor-in-chief of the *University Magazine*, a position he filled so ably that he attracted the attention of the leading journalists of the country. Leaving the University, he went to the editorial staff of the *Evening Bulletin*, and in a short while was promoted to an Associate Editor's desk. I shall let the *Public Ledger* and the *Bulletin* speak of his work as a journalist. The first is a journal established by the late George W. Childs, which still enjoys international reputation because of its high quality and standing as a conservative newspaper. These editorial tributes came as an echo to the selection of Mr. Durham by President Harrison as United States consul to Santo Domingo.

Said the *Bulletin*: "Mr. John S. Durham, who has been for about five years connected with the editorial staff of the *Evening Bulletin*, has resigned in order to accept the appointment of United States consul at San Domingo. * * * The President has made no better appointment than this one. Mr. Durham is a young gentleman of excellent education, acquired by his own labor, extensive reading, quick intelligence, the purest integrity and most honorable aspirations. Manly, but modest, he has commanded the respect of every intelligent gentleman with whom he has been brought in contact. He was most faithful and industrious in his work as a journalist, but in his spare time he devoted himself to the interests of the colored race in Philadelphia, organizing workmen's clubs and other useful associations, encouraging his friends to strive for education and to make themselves by industry and good habits thoroughly fit for the privileges of American citizenship. The proprietors of this paper lose in him a most faithful and agreeable worker. While regretting his departure, they feel confident that in his new sphere of duty he will prove a useful Government officer and a creditable illustration of what, amid many difficulties of an extraordinary character, may be accomplished by an earnest and honorable young man."

Said the *Public Ledger*: "The *Ledger* would entirely agree with the *Evening Bulletin* in its statement that President Harrison 'has made no better appointment' than that of Mr. John S. Durham to the post of consul at San Domingo if it were quite assured that the appointment did not move the recipient from a greater to a lesser sphere of usefulness. The President is, of course, quite right to secure for the Federal service the very best character and talent obtainable, and in this instance he has done it to a conspicuous degree, as Mr. Durham is not only a man of ability, but of exceptional character. But Mr. Durham has been among his own people in Philadelphia, and only he probably knows how hard and with what good results he has worked with and for them. Others know something, not all, of the earnest manly zeal he has persistently shown in his endeavors to improve their condition, physically, mentally, morally and socially. He has been one of the most practicable educators among them, and so unselfish, energetic, intelligent and modest has he been as to compel not only the respect and admiration of his colored, but of his white brethren as well. Mr. Durham is universally esteemed not only as an unobtrusive, sincere helper of his race, but as a citizen and editor. For five years he has been upon the editorial staff of the *Evening Bulletin*, and in that position has established his reputation as a capable, public-spirited and honorable journalist. * * * The only question is, Do not his people and journalism lose more than the country gains by his transfer to the consular service? Nothing but praise is due the President for his desire to secure for that service a man of Mr. Durham's acquirements and respectability, but his departure will still be regretted by those who know with what high purpose and effectiveness he has labored in this city for the public generally and for his own people particularly."

He made a reputation as a diplomat. Returning home in '94, he had barely landed before he had re-entered his old Alma Mater to resume his legal studies which had been interrupted by his absence as a diplomatic officer. In less than two years after his admission to the

(Continued on third page.)

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